

Town of Lucerne
(Town of Lucernemines)
Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal & Iron Company
E of U.S. Route 119, Adjacent to Yellow Creek
Lucerne
Indiana
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-263

HAER
PA,
32-LUCE,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

TOWN OF LUCERNE
(Town of Lucernemines)

HAER
PA.
32-LUCE,
1-

HAER No. PA-263

Location: East of U.S. Route 119, Adjacent to Yellow Creek, Center Township,
Lucerne, Indiana County, Pennsylvania

USGS Quad: Indiana (1:24000)
UTM: 17/656625/4491000

Date of Construction: ca. 1907

Builder: Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal & Iron Company

Present Owner: Private ownership

Present Use: Town

Significance: Lucerne is one of the most intact mining towns in Indiana County, built
originally to house workers for the Lucernemines Coke Works.

Project Information: In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER)
and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year
historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern
Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial
Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory
of Blair, Cambria, Fayette, and Indiana counties as the first step in
identifying the region's surviving historic engineering works and
industrial resources.

The results of this project have been published in Indiana County,
Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites
(1993), edited by Ken Rose and produced by HABS/HAER for the
National Park Service.

Compiler: Richard Quinn, Historian

DESCRIPTION: Lucerne, outside Homer City, is one of the most intact mining towns in Indiana County. Approximately 200 of the nearly 250 original houses survive. The main part of the town was laid out on four long parallel streets, with three other streets located below. Management housing was located to the west, across present Pennsylvania Highway 119. The main mine complex was located south across the railroad.

Three main types of housing are located in the main block of the town. The typical medium-sized house contains seven rooms: parlor, dining room and kitchen downstairs, and four bedrooms upstairs. It is built on a stone foundation, and is topped by a front-gable slate roof. Small shed porches are located to the front and rear. The larger and smaller houses follow the same basic plan, with eight or six rooms, respectively.

To the rear of the houses, along alleyways, were located weatherboarded privies and coal sheds. The privies were square structures with shed roofs with small traps at the rear to empty the waste; the coal sheds were longer structures, with batten doors at either side. These were built on the property lines, and shared by two houses. Several examples of each survive today. The company store, known as Mahoning Supply Company, stood at the base of the village. The large two-and-a-half-story brick structure burned in 1967, but its stone foundations can still be seen.

HISTORY: Lucerne, or Lucernemines, was the model coal company town built by the Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal & Iron Company. It was named after the Swiss city of Luzerne by the Adrian Iselin family, who were of Swiss descent. The new town, five miles south of Indiana on the extension of the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway, was begun in 1907. By 1928, it had fifty single houses, 195 double houses, a doctor's office, and company store.

The mines here, originally two drifts and a shaft, were among the most extensive in the county, and the boney waste pile remaining weighs more than a million tons. Production in 1929 totalled over 773,000 tons. The houses were sold off in 1947, and are now in private ownership. Lucerne Mine #1 shut down in 1929, #2 in 1943, and #3 in 1967.

Sources:

- Cooper, Eileen Mountjoy. *Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company: The First One Hundred Years*. Indiana, PA: Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company, 1982.
- Pennsylvania Department of Mines. *Report of the Department of Mines of Pennsylvania: Part II--Bituminous, 1929-1930*. Harrisburg: n.p., 1932.
- Stephenson, Clarence D. *Indiana County 175th Anniversary History*, v. 2. Indiana, PA: A.G. Hallidin, 1989.